

A
L A Y M A N ' s
S E R M O N

In DEFENCE of
P R I E S T C R A F T.

*And ye shall be unto me a Kingdom of Priests, and an
holy Nation.* Exod. xix. 6.

*But ye are a chosen Generation, a royal Priesthood, an
holy Nation, a peculiar People.* 1 Pet. ii. 9.



L O N D O N :

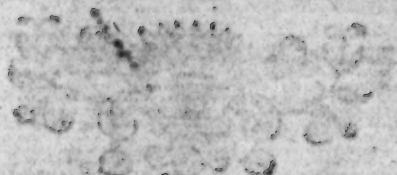
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STERN'S
L.A.M.A.N.'s

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L.A.M.A.N.'s
Printed at the
Press

TO HIS
Worthy Friends,
THE
PRIESTS
OF ALL
DENOMINATIONS,
THE
AUTHOR
WISHETH

Plenty, Honour, and Tranquillity,
Manifested in
LEISURE DAYS, and LOVING NIGHTS!
And humbly beggeth Leave

TO
DEDICATE
These His
LUCUBRATIONS
For Their Service,

As a
TESTIMONY
OF HIS
Profound Submission, implicit Reliance,
and unwearied Zeal.

X

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OF all the Crafts which now do, or ever did exist in the World, there has not been any one so universally honoured, revered, and adored as *Priestcraft*; nor any one, we ought of Consequence to suppose, so deserving of Honour, Reverence, and Adoration. Yet so it hath happened, that notwithstanding this general Veneration, (as there is no Rule without Exceptions) during some Periods, and in some Countries, particularly in our own Age and Nation, this holy Mystery has been contemptuously spoken of, even by the meanest Handicraftsmen. I shall not enquire into the Causes of this periodical Contempt, that having been already done by

* Preach'd to a private Congregation in the Year 1733, and occasioned by a Sermon on the *Duty of People to their Pastors*.

some of the Craftsmen themselves; but only endeavour to shew the Immorality and Irreligion of it, by proving the divine Right of all Priests to exercise this their Craft upon the Laity, and the natural Duty of all Laymen to submit implicitly to the Operation.

The Reason of my engaging in this arduous Task, is chiefly from the Prejudices of my Countrymen. I have observed, with great Concern, the ill Success of the Clergy in defending their own Trade. People are too apt to imagine, that the great Zeal and Vehemence with which they assert their spiritual Prerogatives, as Directors, Stewards, and Guardians of our Souls, are founded originally on the Dignities, Revenues, and other temporal and bodily Appurtenances, which are attached to those Prerogatives. "You are a Party concerned, (this is the Answer of our modern Anti-clericks) and we do not blame you for saying all you can in behalf of your own Mystery: But give us leave, at the same Time, to think for ourselves, and believe just as much as we please of what you advance." Now Matters being at this Pass, and like to continue so while the Priests had no other Advocates but themselves, I thought I could not do a more beneficial Service to the World, than to step in as an Auxiliar on their Side. Layman as I am, and without any Prospect of ever being otherwise, it cannot be suspected that Interest is my Motive: And as to being influenced (the only Motive that can possibly remain) I solemnly protest that I have never been apply'd to, directly nor indirectly, by

any Priest, Presbyter, or Teacher upon Earth, to compose this Apology: Nay farther, that I am not excited to it by particular Friendships or Obligations, of any Kind whatsoever.

The Scheme, indeed, has long been in my Head, and was intended at first in Favour only of the established Clergy: But upon considering the Matter closely, I found it would be better to make the Plan universal, and defend the Priests of the HOTTENTOTS, the CANADANS, and other polite Nations, in short of the whole World, at the same Time. For I understand of late, that in some congregational Churches among us, as well as in that by Law established, great Offence has been taken at an Attempt to extend the priestly Authority. There are People it seems, under all the Denominations in GREAT BRITAIN, (which truly are not a few) who have the Presumption to think that their whole Fortunes are not to be at the Disposal of their spiritual Directors, and who are so profane as to rank Gentlemen invested with the sacred Character in the same Order with themselves; to imagine that a Priest and a Layman may be Brothers, and have mutual Obligations to each other. But how monstrous and absurd these Opinions are, will appear in the Sequel of this Discourse.

I doubt not but some Dignitaries of the High Order will be violently angry with me in this Place, because I condescend to take notice of schismatical Teachers, and to range them without Distinction in the priestly Class: But I declare once for all, that

by the Word Priest, and other Words of a similar Meaning, I understand all the Bramins, Bonzes, Inca's, Boies, Talapoins, Cardinals, Levites, Presbyters, Pastors, Patriarchs, spiritual Overseers, &c. &c. in the whole Universe: Synonymous Terms, which the Diversity of Tongues hath affixed to the same Idea, and which are to be distinguished only in Geography, and its dependant Sciences: It is surprizing methinks, that among a Body of Men, who all profess the same Calling, and proceed upon the same Principles, there should be some who look down with as much Contempt upon others, as they all do in general upon the Laity. Tho' the Modes of Induction, the Habits of Distinction, and indeed the Manners of operating, be somewhat various among different People; yet the Office is always and every where the same,—that of managing our Minds, and acting a Sort of middle Part between the Object of Worship, and the Persons worshipping. The Election of any particular Number of People, is it not equivalent to the Imposition of consecrated Hands? does it not derive the same Power, the same indelible Character on the Person elected? If a Man were before of no higher a Calling than honest JOHN BUNYAN, undoubtedly this Calling of a Religious Society, full as effectually as the Presentation of any Great Officer, elevates him at once into the Quality of younger Brother to the Pope, the Dairi, or the Musti. He is no longer one of the People, no longer any Thing in common with the rest of Mankind; but a Priest, an Ambassador from Heaven,

and a spiritual Guide thither. Is there not, therefore, a mutual Interest throughout the Craft, which it much behoves the Professors jointly to promote? Certainly there is, and when any Teacher upon Earth is affronted, the whole sacred Order, Male and Female, from LONDON to the Land of Jesso, and onward quite round the Globe, is affronted, scandalized, blasphemed thro' his Sides.

This shall suffice by Way of Introduction, and to explain the Nature and Occasion of my present Undertaking. I now proceed to the Apology itself, which I shall handle methodically, from this plain Proposition.

That Priestcraft is the most excellent, and the most justifiable of all Crafts.

And here Gentlemen, to prevent a Misunderstanding between me, the Orator of this Night, and you my Auditors, it will be proper in the first Place, according to the laudable Custom of all discreet Preachers, to explain some of the principal Terms, which I shall have Occasion to make use in the Course of my Lecture.

The most obvious of these is *Priestcraft*; a Word compounded of two Monosyllables, both of them, if I am not mistaken, as significant as any in the ENGLISH Language. I must consider them separately, in their primitive and simple Acceptations, before I pretend to give their full and perfect Meaning, as they stand joined together.

A *Priest* is a Person deputed by any Object of religious Worship, or (which indeed is almost the only Proof of a Deputation) elected by any Society of Devotees, to be a Sort of Mediator between the Parties thus deputing and electing. On the Part of the Superior Being he has the free Right of a privy Counsellor, the Privilege of addressing him in behalf of his Clients, and of declaring and explaining his Will in all important Points. On the Part of Man, the Client, he has a Right of governing his Intellects, directing his Passions, preventing his Enquiries, prescribing to him in all spiritual Things, and taking a Share with him of all temporal ones, without being exposed to the Fatigue and bodily Toil by which they are usually acquired.

I say "deputed by any Object of religious Worship," because I take the Word Priest, as I before declared, in the most universal Sense, including therein as much the Bramins and Bonzes of EAST INDIA, as the several Orders of EUROPE: For which Reason I could not, with any Propriety, say "deputed by the Supreme Being;" since 'tis well known that He is not always the immediate Object of religious Worship, but that Abundance of Priests profess themselves the Deputies of other Gods.

But then you object against the Word *deputed*. How can a Man be deputed by an irrational, or an inanimate Being, as some of these Gods are? I answer, that tho' We conceive the Gods of other Nations under these degrading Ideas, They are far from thinking of them in the same Manner Themselves:

They believe the divine Virtue to inhabit in what we simply call an Ox, a Log, an Onion, or a Wafer; and therefore this Deputation is always supposed; which is as much as I require, and as much perhaps as can be proved of it by some who talk highly of these Matters.

Craft, the other compounding Word which I am to explain, in the general Sense of it signifies—a peculiar Art or Cunning, which any Man has either found out himself, or learn'd of another; by means of which he becomes useful to Society, fills up a Place in the Commonwealth, and appropriates to himself a comfortable Subsistence, or probably a good Share of Riches.

If it be objected, that there are many Arts which never afford their Professors either Riches or a Livelihood; I only answer, that then they are not Crafts; for tho' every Craft be an Art, every Art is not a Craft: The liberal Arts, in particular, have little or no Craft in them, and are therefore the greatest Enemies that Priestcraft has in the World.

From these two Definitions will easily result a third, that of *Priestcraft*, which take as follows. Priestcraft is the Art and Mystery of playing upon the human Mind, as it is practis'd by the Persons describ'd under the Word *Priest*: Or, more literally, the Art of modelling our Faculties, and managing our Passions, so as to make them serve to whatever Purpose the Craftsman designs them; and of squeezing out, at the same Time, all the Superfluity of our worldly Substance.

Thus far our Definitions have been obvious : But there is another Word, which we shall find it hard to make familiar to the Understanding ; I mean that of *Priesthood*. This is used to denote that inherent and indelible Character, which every Priest is possess'd of from the Time that he begins to be so. I know not how to illustrate it better than by another Word of the same Form, which * is *Knighthood* ; signifying a certain invisible Quality, convey'd by a Thump on the Shoulder to the Person whom Majesty favours in that Manner, and who is from that Time forwards called a Knight.

Now I am got upon this Parallel, I may pursue it yet farther, and compare Priestcraft also to Knighterrantry, or the antient Business of a Knight ; and by that Means set the Man, the Office, and the Manner of officiating, in a pretty strong, and I believe not disagreeable Light.

A Priest, having been once formally invested with that Character, puts on a few Ornaments, which nobody is to wear but those of his Order ; holds up a Stone, a jointed Baby, or a Piece of Bread, and tells you 'tis a God : Or, to make the Similitude yet stronger, he points to the Image of a certain Virgin Lady, and tells you she is the Queen of Heaven,

* There is a Passage in the *Independent Whig*, which somewhat resembles this : But as the Author had never seen that Book when he wrote this Discourse, he saw no Reason to throw out a Thought which was entirely his own, and which might occur to any one else in treating of the same Subject.

and the Mother of God. You must immediately fall down on your Knees, and worship; stedfastly believing that what he affirms is true: Otherwise he cuts you off from the Church, delivers you over to the Devil, or, if it be in his Power (as it frequently is) to the Civil Magistrate, who will either make you recant, or leave the World in a Bonfire.

In like Manner the antient Knights, being dubb'd and arm'd, got upon their Horses, and made Proclamation that such a Lady was the greatest Beauty in the Universe; challenging the whole World to prove the contrary. Every one present was obliged to acquiesce in what he said, or patiently submit to have his Throat cut in the Lady's Behalf: Unless any Man were so brave as to set up another Gentlewoman, and undertake to maintain her Character against the Idol of the former. Then they fell to Blows, and she was the fairest Lady who had the stoutest Champion. As that has generally been accounted the best Mode of priestly Operation, which had the most Power to support it.

I might likewise observe, that our spiritual Champions are like the others in their Manner of Address to the People. Don QUIXOTE swore by his Knight-hood, that DONNA DULCINEA DEL TOBOSA was the PHOENIX of her Sex: So our ghostly Guides confirm all they retail to us with their priestly Word, which it is Heresy not to believe.

There is one Thing indeed, to do them both Justice, in which Priestcraft and Knight-errantry seem to differ very considerably, and that is this:

Knight-errantry has been long laugh'd out of Countenance, and all its romantic Heroes driven off the Stage; so that every Gentleman has had the Liberty to like what Lady he pleases: But Priestcraft seems bravely resolv'd to defend its Ground against all Opposition: It scorns to be put to the Blush; and is determined never to let us have the Choice of our own Thoughts and Opinions, because it knows how detrimental such a Freedom is likely to prove.

Another Word, of which it will be necessary to fix the Meaning, is *Layman*, or, to speak in Phrase, One of the Vulgar. This is a Machine, or if you please an animated Creature, which has all the visible Marks of Humanity as much as a Priest, and in reality all the Parts and internal Faculties requisite in a Priest; but all this without the Power, or at least without the Right of putting these Faculties in Motion, or applying these Parts to any manner of Use. He is an Engine to be set a going, or a musical Instrument to be play'd upon, by the ghostly Father.

I shall be excused the Use of these Expressions, when it is considered that the making Man a Machine, is literally agreeable to the Opinion of the most famous modern Philosophers. My whole System then, hitherto, advances no more than this: That a select Number of these Machines are, by some Means or other, inform'd with a Principle of Motion and Action, which they communicate to others, and so set the whole Species a going.

Let us examine the Aptitude of this mechanical Notion in the present Case, by comparing it with the Ideas we usually entertain of other Machines. We suppose in them all a just Conformity and Proportion of Parts, which render them proper to answer the End of their Contrivance, whenever the Workman pleases to make the Application. In a Watch, for Instance, are the Wheels, the Spring, the Chain, all which contribute to move the Hand about, when they are put together, and strain'd up to a just Pitch. So in a Man there is a great Variety of Faculties, adapted to each other, which make him capable of a thousand Things, when they are properly tun'd. It is the Work of the Priest to fire the Imagination, inform the Judgment, furnish the Memory, oil the Conscience, and determine the Will; which being done, he applies the whole Man to what Purpose he thinks proper.

Bigotry and Devotion, which in this Place I shall use as synonymous Terms, without enquiring whether or no they are generally received as such, serve to express those passive Principles in a Layman, which result from the just Modulation of his intellectual Faculties, and receive the first and immediate Impressions of Priestcraft: They are, as it were, the Spring of the whole human Machine, which being wound up by the Key of Instruction in the Mouth of the Priest, act upon all the other Parts in such a Manner, as to excite in every one the proper Motion, and forward the great End of the Craft.

Thus have I gone thro' the *Systematical Part* of my Discourse, and endeavoured to explain all, or most of the Terms of Art, which I shall make use of in the *Apologetical*; to which I now humbly crave your serious Attention.

What I have to offer may be divided into two general Parts, each of which will naturally separate into several Subdivisions. In the *first* Place, I shall prove the real and unalienable Dignity of the Priesthood: In the *second*, I shall vindicate Priestcraft, as it has formerly ever been, and is at present practised, so far as the Laity will permit, in all the Countries of the known World.

The Dignity of the Priesthood may be shewn from its Antiquity and continued Succession; from the extraordinary Manner in which it has commonly been imparted to the Founders of particular Orders; from the sublime Titles with which it has always been distinguished; from the Object about which it is employ'd; from the Consent of all Nations in the Maintenance of it; and from the superior Qualities it communicates to all who are invested with it.

I begin with its Antiquity and Succession. It might not be difficult, perhaps, to prove the Priesthood as old as the World, were a Day or two of much Consequence in this Affair: But without straining any Point, we find all the Offices of that Function performed, according to the System I have introduced, in the very Garden of EDEN. EVE our general Mother was the Devotee. The Person who officiated is not so clearly mark'd out, but that there

is Room for divers Opinions concerning him: He is only call'd The Serpent, as we are to suppose from his Subtilty, which is particularly mention'd by the JEWISH Lawgiver. I cannot determine whether or no this individual Person be elsewhere distinguished in the sacred Writings by a proper Name; tho' our modern Divines seem to agree in Opinion, that it was no other than SATAN, the Prince of Deceit and Lies. With all my Heart, if they are fond of the Interpretation: I can only say, that let his Name have been what it will, it is to me very apparent that he was a complete Priest. Consider these Particulars. First, He assumed the Right of dictating to the Woman, and Informing her what would be for her spiritual Advantage. *Eat of this Fruit*, says he, *and ye shall be as Gods, knowing Good and Evil.*—Secondly, He assured her of the future Consequence of following his Instructions, in a Point which none but a Priest, or one favoured with a supernatural Intelligence, could pretend to know, when he told her, *She should not die.* He deceived her it is true, and in that Particular shew'd himself a lying Prophet; which somewhat favours the modish Opinion concerning him: But are we from hence to conjecture, that he was not of the priestly Order?—Surely, No.—Thirdly, The Woman, who doubtless had a better Opportunity, than we can have at this Distance of Time, of knowing who he was, immediately hearken'd to all he said, and thereby confess'd the Authority of his Office, and the Dignity of his Person. This may serve for the Antiquity of the Priesthood.

The inspired Writers and JOSEPHUS have given us Tables of its Succession in the JEWISH Nation, from its regular Institution in the Person of AARON to the Destruction of the second Temple. The Catalogue of the Popes, to be met with in Ecclesiastical Historians, furnishes us with a like uninterrupted Series in the Catholic Church, from St. PETER to his present Holiness. The Histories of almost every Nation are well nigh as circumstantial in the Account of their spiritual Princes, as of their temporal Ones: So that having fix'd the Article of Antiquity, that of Succession will admit of no Dispute.

In the *second* Place, I am to take notice of the extraordinary Manner in which the Priesthood has been imparted to the Founders of particular Orders. Not to mention Instances that are well known, and which we all believe from our Cradles, (tho' these might afford us several curious Particulars) I shall confine myself to what may be selected from profane History: And even here I shall be very brief, touching only upon some of the most remarkable Examples, in a cursory Manner; for to trace all the Mysteries and Labyrinths of Priestcraft, in any one Establishment, is a Work of too great Difficulty for my poor Capacity and Learning.

I begin with MINOS, the celebrated Legislator and King of CRETE, who for his great Justice, and the Prudence of his Institutions, is represented by the Poets as one of the infernal Judges. This Prince, according to HOMER *, was favoured with the Conversation of

* Odyss. Lib. xix.

JUPITER himself. Once every nine Years, it seems, he retired into a Cave, which was called *the Cave of JUPITER*, where that Supreme of the Pagan Deities condescended to retouch his Laws. One would think indeed, that this novennial Revival should have rendered the divine Concurrence a little suspected; because it was natural to have supposed, that the King of Gods and Men was able to have given a complete System at first. But thus did the antient Sages enhance the Idea of themselves, and command superior Reverence from the People. There were Prophets, Sorcerers, Magicians in Abundance, who could effect very extraordinary Things, by Powers unknown to the Vulgar: But this was not sufficient for a Legislator; he must go further, and give them to understand, that he was not only indulged with supernatural Visions and Revelations, but received into the Confidence, Friendship, Familiarity of the divine Beings; the most infallible Proof of which, was the going often into their Company.

NUMA POMPILIUS, the second King of ROME, and the Author of its antient Religion, was equally sensible of the divine Assistance.* When the Temple of JANUS was shut, and all the neighbouring Nations were united in Bonds of Amity, lest the warlike Spirit of his ROMANS should grow wanton in Idleness, he took care to give it a superstitious Turn. And as he knew the Fear of the Gods could not be efficaciously implanted in the Minds of that rough

* Livy, Lib. i.

People, without the Intervention of some Miracle to enforce it home, he prevailed upon the Goddess *ÆGERIA* to pay him a Visit every Night, and dictate to him such Institutions as would be most acceptable to her Brother Divinities; for each of whom he established an Order of Priests, and a sufficient Number of Holidays. This kept the People in Action, and made them governable; which otherwise they would hardly have been, in a Time of profound Tranquility. *ROMULUS* *, his Predecessor, was feign'd to be translated among the Gods, upon the Evidence of *JULIUS PROCULUS*, with a View as well to enhance the regal Character, and multiply the Objects of Superstition, as to prevent an Enquiry into the Truth and Circumstances of his private Murder. I cannot but commend one Particular in the Conduct of *NUMA*, that has not been imitated, as I remember, by any other Legislator: I mean his chusing a female Divinity, before any God of them all, for his Night-Companion.

Not that *ÆGERIA* was the only one of her Sex, who assisted in Affairs of this Nature: For the Mother of *PYTHAGORAS*, my next Lawgiver, had a considerable Hand in propagating his Revelation. † That Philosopher, when he came to *ITALY*, made him a subterraneous Cave, in which he shut himself up during a whole Year. His Mother, in the mean Time, not only supply'd him with Necessaries,

* *Idem* *ibid.*

† *DIOG. LAERT.* in *Vit. PYTHAG.*

but deliver'd to him in Writing all the Transactions and Occurrences of this Upper World. At the End of the Year forth he issues, all squallid and lean, declaring he had been in the infernal Regions, and there learned all that had happened since his Departure, which he recited in Order. This gained him the Attention of the Populace, who afterwards received his philosophical and theological Lectures, as proceeding from some Divinity. PYTHAGORAS hereby established that Reputation, which hath subsisted ever since with so much Honour: And the Woman his Mother, having been well instructed by him in the great Virtue of Silence, prudently kept the Secret.

It does not appear, however, that PYTHAGORAS was the Inventor of this Cave-Inspiration, or the first Revivor of it after MENOS *. He had conversed with ZOROASTER, who was playing the same Game in PERSIA, and with equal Success. The MAGIAN Religion, or Sun-Worship, was just upon the Brink of Ruin, occasioned by the Imposture of the counterfeit SMERDIS: But ZOROASTER was resolved, if possible, to restore it with Improvements. He had been a Servant of one of the JEWISH Prophets, was initiated in all their Mysteries, had great Learning and Abilities, and was excellently qualified for introducing a new Revelation. Accordingly he retired among the MEDES, the most bigotted

* PRIDEAUX's Connect. Book I. Part iv.

and ignorant of the Worshipers of *MITRA**; shut himself up in a Cave, pretended to be abstracted from all worldly Considerations, and entirely sway'd by the divine Impulse. Here he compos'd the *Zendavesta*, or *Fire-kindler*; which was the Name he gave to his Book of Religious Institutions, alluding to its wonderful Efficacy in kindling the Fire of divine Love in the Heart.

We do not find indeed, in the two last Instances, that the particular Mode of Inspiration was specified; much less that a personal Converse was pretended with any Deity, as in the Stories of *MINOS* and *NUMA*. But the different Situations of these Legislators ought to be considered, and how much more easy it was for a King, than for a poor erratic Philosopher, to perform in the high and magnificent Way. It would have been difficult for *ZOROASTER*, or *PYTHAGORAS*, to have avoided a particular Scrutiny into the Affair by their Superiors, if they had pretended to these reiterated Visits: It was therefore their Business to do the whole Work at once; to shut themselves up, and contrive some certain Marks or Criteria, which should serve for Demonstration to the Vulgar, (who are seldom very critical in these Matters) that their Pretensions were well founded. Such were the Recitals of *PYTHAGORAS*, of what had happened during his Abode in the lower World; which were immediately taken as Proofs that he was instructed by the Gods.

* The Sun.

MAHOMET *, I confess, tho' quite illiterate, improved upon all his learned Predecessors; he had his periodical Inspirations, whispered into his Ear by a Dove, which was visible to his Disciples: But he had a new Idea to proceed upon; for that Form had never been given to any Divinity in the Times of the Antients. Doves, we know, are very gentle and tractable Creatures; and it was not difficult to make one of them descend to the Place where it was usually fed: But it was hardly possible to have the same Part acted by a Man or a Woman, without Danger of Detection. As to other Particulars, he had his Cave as well the PERSIAN and the GREEK, and copied them in his pretended Mortifications: But so soon as he found himself the Master of sufficient Power, he had Recourse to the Exercise of it, and established that Empire and Religion by Force of Arms, which his Policy perhaps would never have raised alone. Having once got his Pretensions received, he did not continue barely to multiply Revelations, but enforced those he had already broached, by inculcating the Practice of a single Precept, that of propagating Faith by Compulsion.

Thus we see how different Religions, and with them different Orders of Priesthood, have been imparted to the World in the several Ages of it. They were all revealed, at least pretendedly. But we have hitherto kept only to our own Hemisphere, where the several Lawgivers may be supposed to

* See the Lives of him.

have copied each other. It was much more strange to find the same Things in AMERICA, where the Inhabitants had not the least Knowledge either of the Customs or People of our World. * MANGO CAPAC, and COYA MAMA his Queen and Sister, the first of the Inca's of PERU, pretending that they were the Children of the Sun, sent down for the Instruction of Mankind, soon engaged the Attention of their barbarous Countrymen, and made way for establishing a new Religion, a regal Government and Priesthood; which subsisted in great Splendor till the Invasion of the SPANIARDS, who introduced the peaceable Christian Faith upon the MAHOMETAN Principle of Force. The Regulations made by these Inca's, both in Morality and Policy, were hardly inferior to those of the most civilized Nations in EUROPE; and the Simplicity of their Subjects much greater. But none of those could have been introduced, to any effectual Purpose, without the Sanction of a Revelation from the Sun. To obtain this, therefore, MANGO CAPAC and his Sister retired from human Society, and appeared again after a convenient Season, with full Power to impose the Laws of their Father, which they did not fail to publish.

From all these Instances, whatever may be thought of the Revelations themselves, these manifest Truths may be collected: That in the general Sense of all People, none but a Divine Being has the Power of imposing Laws, to controul the Consciences of Man-

* DE LA VEGA'S History of the Inca's.

kind: That all the great Men in History, who took upon them to institute new Religions, and new Orders of Priesthood, either had or pretended to have divine Revelations: That the Priesthood, whenever it was really imparted, was imparted in a very extraordinary and uncommon Manner, a Manner which common Reason could never comprehend: That the Test of true Revelation, to short-sighted Mortals, is not altogether so certain as some have imagined; but must, however, be capable of being fixed, upon comparing it with all the others: That the Religion of Priests, as it required these extraordinary Means to introduce it, had always somewhat in it that was not built upon the Religion of Reason.

But these Reflections are only by the bye. I now proceed to a *third* Confirmation of the priestly Dignity; in which I must be very short, as in all the subsequent Particulars of this Proof. It is, The sublime Titles wherewith the Priesthood has been always distinguished. Not to mention those of Reverend, Right Reverend, Most Reverend, His Lordship, His Grace, His Eminency, &c. I would just take notice, that Vicar-General of CHRIST, Ambassador from Heaven, Our Lord God the Pope, the Dairi *, the Lama †, and the Kutucta †, are somewhat above the usual Strain of Compliments to the very Greatest of the Laity; yet, if we believe Wri-

* The High-Priest of JAPAN.

† TARTARIAN High-Priests.

ters of the most undisputed Veracity, all these have been used.

The Object of the Priesthood, the *fourth* Thing to be considered, is the Intellect, or that Part of a Man which influences his outward Actions, and gives him a Superiority over the brutal Creation. The Management of this must certainly be an Office of the highest Importance, and confer the greatest Dignity imaginable on the Person who is intrusted with it; since it is true in the most general Sense, that an Officer always receives his Character and Degree from the Place he officiates in. Hence it is that a King is the highest of all Civil Officers, as he is supreme Director of our outward Conduct; and by Parity of Reason, the greatest King in the Universe, who is merely a Layman (which, thank Heaven! ours is not) is inferior to the meanest Priest, as his Office is confined to the less noble Part of the human Machine.

That, in the *fifth* Place, The Consent of all Nations hath established the Dignity of the Priesthood, is apparent from History, and must be allow'd by every one, who has been but a little conversant therein. And this being allow'd, I believe no-body will dispute my bringing the Opinion of all Mankind as a very substantial Proof. I know there has been one general Objection started against this Opinion of an Universal Consent. It is taken from an inconsiderable Set of People, who have appeared frequently in small Parties, under the Names of Moralists, Deists, Free-thinkers, &c. and entered their Remon-

stances against paying the customary Reverence to the sacred Order: But as the Number of these People was never sufficient to render them formidable, and I shall by and by prove them to be all Hereticks, I see no Necessity to give myself here any Trouble concerning them. There might be, besides, a local Objection taken from the Conduct of the BURATES, a People in the North of TARTARY, who frequently sacrifice their Priests, in order to send them nearer to their Gods. But let it be considered, that they do this only from a Principle of Piety, and when they are in great Straights, and it will then appear to be an Instance of their entire Dependance on the Mediation of these holy Men; the Reason they give for this Practice being, that by thus sending them nearer to their Deities, they put them into a better Capacity of pleading the common Cause. It is a Wonder, methinks, that a Custom so demonstrably for the Honour of the Priests, has not, before now, become more general. And besides the Honour of it, can it fail of being greatly advantageous, as it the sooner removes those pious Souls, who for the most Part are weary of this wicked World, to the Possession of those Joys which they have lived in the Contemplation of, and which their Hearts, no doubt, have panted after?

The *last* Argument I shall make use of, to prove the Dignity of the Priesthood, is, The superior Qualities it communicates to the Persons who are invested with it. Who ever knew an unrighteous, or an unlearned Priest? Who at least, that had a tolerable

Share of Devotion, ever discovered either Ignorance or Wickedness in his own Priest? As to what may be insinuated by others, we ought to impute it only to that Envy which animates Parties, and is a constant and necessary Attendant on all the Species of Bigotry. Furthermore, does not the Priesthood convey a remarkable Stateliness, and Gravity of Behaviour, even to the leudest Collegians, which discovers itself in every Action of Life? This must be apply'd to the Character, and not to the natural Tempers of the Men; which, before Initiation, or the Prospect of it, are doubtless as various as those of other Mortals. Another Quality it communicates, is a tenacious Love of Property, and a great Propensity to extend it; a strange Aptitude to the making of Claims, and to the enforcing of them with the severest Rigour. Has not this been manifest, even in our own Land, from the many vexatious Prosecutions that have been carried on concerning Tythes, and even the most frivolous Points of the priestly Prerogative? Finally, is not a Priest always remarkable for his Fondness of those Titles, which the Devotion of Mankind, and the Indulgence of his Country have given him.

A propos to this last Particular, I remember a Fact that happened not many Years ago, and which I can venture to attest. A certain Ecclesiastic of the first Order, who had newly acquired the significant Monosyllable *Right*, came to a Bookseller's Shop. The Master was not within; and the Man, dull Rascal! could not distinguish the Air

of a L^d from that of a common Curate.—Young Man, have you the Codex? The Decretals? BARONIUS? BURNET's History?—Yes Sir, quoth THOMAS, at the End of every Question; and reach'd down the Books in Order.—I believe, young Man, you hardly know me.—No Sir.—I live in ** Square, and you sent me a Catalogue on TUESDAY last.—Sir, the Porter carried out many that Day, and to different Parts of the Town: I cannot know any Gentleman by that Token.—Well, but have you C***s Sermons?—Yes Sir, a very good Set, here they are.—A very handsome Set indeed; however, I have no Occasion for them.—All this while THOMAS, intent only on his Business, had no Idea that these Sermons were to point out his Customer's Name.—Well! who could help it? The Doctor, tho' much dissatisfy'd, was oblig'd to put up with this rude Treatment. He bought what Books he wanted; and sent for a Hackney Coach, to carry home—not the Books (that would have spoil'd all) but himself.—Tie these up together, and my Man shall come for them presently.—THOMAS did as commanded, and, upon Reflection, began to think he had highly offended. He found, in less than half an Hour, that he was not mistaken: A Fellow in a Livery came to the Door, and ask'd for the Books which the L* B** of S* ** had left there.—What Confusion, think you, was poor THOMAS in!

We learn from this Instance, that it is not merely in other Mens' Opinion, but even in the Opinion of themselves, who are professedly the most

humble Men living, that Priests are People of great Dignity and Importance. What has been said therefore may suffice, by Way of both Argument and Example, to vindicate their Character against all Exceptions, and excite us to double our Regard towards them, and to exert ourselves in promoting their Interest, as we are in Duty bound.

I am now to defend their Craft, as it has formerly been, and is at present practised, in all the Parts of the known World. This I shall briefly do under two Heads. *First*, By shewing the Nature of a Craft in general; and *Secondly*, By setting forth the good Effects that Priestcraft in particular has produced.

But before I enter upon these, I must say a Word or two concerning this Practice, in order to shew what it has been, and now is. The grand Articles of it are as follow: The keeping the Laity as ignorant, and under as much Subjection as possible: The insisting very frequently, and very fervently, on their own Prerogatives, Rights, and Honours: The introducing as much Pageantry as possible, to engage the People's Attention, and divert them from any dangerous Points of Speculation; which, perhaps, might turn the Brains of a poor Layman; and possibly, which is worst of all, make him disregard his spiritual Guides: The establishing as many pious Frauds as the Pockets of the People can support, by which means the otherwise unruly Multitude, being very poor, becomes very passive. These, I say, are some of the principal Articles of

Priestcraft: And among the Frauds I have mentioned, may be reckoned, The long Catalogue of superstitious Holidays, celebrated with public and pompous Festivals; Confession and Absolution; Penance; Purgatory; Limbo; the sensual Paradise of the MAHOMETANS; the Lake in CHINA, where the Souls of their Infants remain till they are pray'd out by the Priests of the Country; the Elyzium and Tartarus of the Antients; the Country behind the Mountains, so much talk'd of by the AMERICANS: With all the other Worlds in the Moon, and elsewhere, which the Priests have taught, and the People believed: Add to these, the Doctrines of Relicks, Miracles, Apparitions, and the like; besides the numberless Ceremonies which a Devotee must submit to, and pay for in every Country of the World, and a Priest perform, if ever the poor Penitent thinks of regaining his former Mistress, or any Thing else which he valued in this World. These are the Practices which I am now to defend:

First, From the Nature of a Craft; which is suppos'd to engage all the Art and Cunning that the Professors of it are endued with. The more Impositions, the better; and he who can impose his System with the most Success, and the greatest Grace, will certainly be the worthiest and best Man. Something new, to engross our Devotion and our Pence, is often as serviceable to the Priesthood, as a new Patern to the Mercers at a dead Time of Trade, or after a general Mourning. Our Curiosity in Religion will lead us to as great Lengths, if not greater than in any

other Particular: Certainly therefore all devout Persons are most oblig'd to those Performers, who find them the greatest Variety of Entertainment.

Secondly, From the good Effects which Priestcraft has had in the World. This, indeed, is a strong and weighty Argument in its Defence, and shews how justly it is preferred to all other Crafts. I might enumerate many of these good Effects, were it not that I have already trespassed upon your Patience: There are a few, however, which I must not omit. The Establishment of mighty Empires is the first that occurs. For this I would turn back your Attention to the Passages of History already mentioned. The Frauds of NUMA POMPILIUS were the Foundation of the ROMAN Greatness. The People received them as from a Divinity; and the SYBILLINE Prophecies, which were afterwards * added as an Improvement of NUMA's Plan, by returning such Oracles as were always suited to the Exigencies of the State, supported their Minds in the most dangerous of their Expeditions. The PERSIAN Monarchs, who make such a Figure in antient History, were the Scholars of ZOROASTER; and at this Time there is not a faithful GAUR, † but would suffer Death for the Doctrine of his great Prophet. The TURKISH, TARTAR, MOGUL, and MOROCCO Empires, are all the Offspring of the MAHOMETAN Forgeries: As those of CHINA, JAPAN, and other Heathen

* By TARQUIN the Proud.

† The modern Disciples of ZOROASTER are so called.

Countries, are founded upon an Adherence to the Precepts and Mysteries of their several Philosophers, Priests, and pretended Magicians; who are the same Men under different Names. We need only read the Histories written by the SPANISH Invaders themselves, (who were ready enough to depreciate the PERUVIAN Religion, in order to vindicate their own Barbarities) for an Account of the surprising Power, Riches, and Magnificence, which resulted from the Institutions of the Inca's. And how has Christianity and Dominion been propagated together, upon the Ruins of Paganism and Superstition, both in the EAST and WEST INDIES, by the Industry and Art of the Catholic Missionaries, supported by a due Acquisition of civil and military Force, and the salutary Engines of Firelock and Faggot!

Another Proof of the good Effect of Priestcraft, is The Influence it has on the Great and Mighty Ones of the Earth. It keeps a Sort of Equilibre between Subjects and their Sovereign; not permitting the former to grow rich and mutinous, unless on certain Occasions; nor the latter too powerful and assuming. Vainly was it thought, till Priestcraft shew'd the contrary, that Kings were accountable to no earthly Tribunal: But Depositions, Assassinations, Allegiance dispensed with, have sufficiently convinced Mankind that nothing is unaccountable—but Priestcraft.

I shall mention but one Instance more, tho' many yet remain. How has Priestcraft adorned our Com-

munities, as well as reformed our Manners! Not to take notice of the decent and solemn Figure made by Priests themselves, and which is owing to their Garb, their Gravity, their good Living; may we not ascribe to them all the most sumptuous Buildings upon Earth? The Religion instituted by God himself, and communicated to his Servant *Moses*, had for a long Time only an ordinary Tent devoted to it, and in its greatest Lustre no more than a single Temple: But the several Religions instituted by Priests, have each of them an infinite Number. Temples, Pagodes, Mosques, Churches, how do they beautify every City, and every Village! We are not only taxed for the Maintenance of them, but cantoned into Districts for the Sake of placing them at due Distance. Yet, what is very surprising, our modern Priests, like those of the Jews, affect to speak of this Multiplicity of Structures in the single Number. The Temple! The Temple! might formerly be a just Exclamation. But to hear The Church! The Church! in these our Days, what a monstrous Idea does it give us? Or rather, what a Multitude of Ideas does it awaken, which assembled together, present us with a Picture more bulky than the Tower of BABEL, even supposing it finished? What pity that succeeding Architects, in the religious Way, did not follow that original Plan! The Church might then indeed, by this Time, have been a sort of scaling Ladder to Heaven, not in a metaphorical, but a literal Sense; even supposing the celestial Pavement to have been much higher above

our Heads, than some venerable Churchmen have wisely imagined it.

Gross as it is, however, this complex Idea of a general Church hath been so effectually bandy'd about, that, at some certain Times, it seems to have engaged the general Attention of Mankind. To instance only in our own Country: In the Reign of the late Queen ANNE, a celebrated Priest made Proclamation in the largest Cathedral of this Kingdom, that the Church was in Danger. Immediately all Heads were employ'd, and all Hands were at Work, to save the Church from falling: And because it was a Matter of such Importance, our Army was called home, and an End put to a terrible and bloody War, which had otherwise utterly ruined Louis LE GRAND, a very good Churchman, and a Monarch whose Piety, pacific Temper, and steady Attachment to his Word, employ'd the Pens of all the Wits of his Nation, for near three Quarters of a Century successively. To the Vigilance of this worthy Priest we owe not only the Preservation of all our old Churches, but perhaps the Erection of many new ones: Besides that the present King of FRANCE, who, 'tis said, inherits all the Virtues of his great Predecessor, is at this Day able to defend his hereditary Dominions against the Invasion of his Neighbours, and even to extend them at their Expence.

Having now sufficiently performed my Promise, I shall conclude with a few miscellaneous Observations, by Way of Reflection on what has been said.

And, *first*, from the Advantage that Priestcraft has been of to Mankind, I would take Occasion to offer a Scheme for extending its Influence, and making it yet more universally beneficial; that so, if there should be an Increase of Professors, as probably there may be, all the supernumerary ones may be supported with the same Decency and Magnificence as those we are already blest with. I would recommend it as necessary, on this Occasion, to have a Writing from the Priests (for which I leave them to find a Name) to be added to every Lawyer's Writ, Justice of Peace's Warrant, and Doctor's Prescription; that all those un sanctify'd Scrolls may have the greater Efficacy, and be defended from human Mischances: For which Writing I would require the same Money to be paid, as for the original Writ, Warrant, or Prescription. I would also have a Dispensation from the Priest made requisite, and the Neglect of it fineable, before we undertake any Thing extraordinary in common Life; such as the hiring a new House, the setting up a Trade, going a Journey, making Love to a young Lady, and the like. And if extraordinary Affairs should be found insufficient, this Article might admit of vast Improvement, and be extended to almost all the ordinary Actions of Life. Finally, I would never have a Man put himself to any uncommon Expence for a Dinner, or broach a new Cask of strong Liquor, in order to treat his Friends, without inviting his Priest at the same Time, that he may approve of the Extravagance, and sanctify

the Excess. I could, in the same Manner, by Way of Hint only, add several other Ways and Means to the same Effect, which at present I shall leave the Priesthood to search after, to whose Consideration also I commit the Improvement of the above Particulars. They have them gratis, without Fee or Hope of Reward. Not but that I might have expected, by Way of Gratitude, some little Return of Praise, were it not that I have been well assured, it is never their Custom to return Thanks for any Thing.

I would next inculcate the Doctrine of absolute Submission to, and implicit Dependence on, our spiritual Guides. No Man can urge this Doctrine with more Authority than myself, who have, perhaps, proved more for the Priesthood than ever was proved before. Let not your vain Reasonings, your mathematical Demonstrations and Distinctions, interfere with your Piety and Devotion; but be entirely passive in your Opinions, as well as your Obedience. Happy the People who can see their God in a Piece of Bread, a Stone, or a Block which themselves grubb'd out of the Earth. Our Thinking, our Enquiring, our unlawful Desire to know more than is proper for us to know, are the Source of all our Uneasiness. He is the peaceful Man, who trusts his Body to Providence, and his Soul to the Priests. In short, I am so firmly engaged in the Cause of Priestcraft, and such an irreconcilable Foe to whatever obstructs the Increase of its Dominion, that I intend very soon to write and publish three long Satires, against its three most implacable Enemies,

NATURAL REASON, COMMON SENSE, and HUMAN LEARNING.

I have already given an honourable Sense to the Word *Bigotry*; by making it the same with Devotion. This Word, therefore, and that of Priestcraft are infinitely obliged to me, and may reasonably hope for the future to be used only with Reverence and Regard. I would also have the Words *Orthodoxy* and *Heterodoxy* used only to distinguish a firm Attachment or Non-attachment to the Religion of one's Country, and the Doctrine of the established Priests, let the said Religion and Doctrine be what they will. This will prevent the Abuse of these Words in Time to come, which have hitherto had a different Meaning in every Country, and among every Sect in the Universe.

And whereas we have hitherto been told, that there can be but one orthodox Opinion, and that all other Opinions are Heresies; I now affirm the direct contrary, and maintain, that all the Hereticks in the World are of one Faith, and that therefore an Agreement of Notions can be no Sign of Orthodoxy. If every Man who believes in his Priest be orthodox, as I have already proved, and if all Men but the Disciples of COMMON SENSE and REASON do thus implicitly believe, as I could prove with the same Facility if Time would permit, it follows, that those Disciples of COMMON SENSE and REASON are the only Hereticks in the World, and the only Men whose Society true Bigots should avoid. If a Man talk of universal Benevolence and Charity,

let the Orthodox shun him like the Pestilence; but if he threaten with Fire and Faggot, and condemn every Opinion but his own, besure he is a true Friend to the Priesthood, and a steady Devotee. Never did Men give so much Proof of their Piety, as the SPANIARDS when they conquer'd AMERICA, and murder'd all they met with, for not believing what they had never heard of.

It is with Grief that I am obliged, at the End of this Apology, to except some from the Benefit of it; who, tho' they bear the Name of Priests, know nothing at all of the Craft: A Company of false Brethren, that eat the Bread of their Mother the Church, but join themselves in Society with her Enemies, the Hereticks just now exploded. Some of these, I understand, are so impolitic as to speak their Sentiments, and to allow that nothing should be kept mysterious, which may be made intelligible. Without setting them together by the Ears about Trifles, they advise People to follow the Road which Justice, Honour, and a few more old-fashion'd Principles point out to them; thereby exposing the sacred Character, and giving the Profane Occasion to hold it in Contempt. Others perhaps, who are not altogether so obstinate in Heresy, will just allow, in the general, that there are some Things among them which deserve Reformation. But let me tell them, that, tho' more likely to be reclaimed; they are not less pernicious to the Craft than the more avowed Betrayers of it; forasmuch as no Man can be a true Priest, who

does not hold himself, and his Profession, to be absolutely above Censure.

I may be now permitted to speak a Word or two for myself. I expect not to be contradicted in any Particular I have advanced; because by opposing me, you will oppose the Authority of the Priesthood; which I now represent, and prove yourselves to be Hereticks. And take this moreover by the Way, that while this Portion of the sacerdotal Dignity rests upon me, should any one attempt to call in Question the least *Iota* of my Apology, I shall treat him with Neglect; forasmuch as I imagine myself, at present, above taking notice of a Lay-Objection. Finally, be exhorted to pay due Deference to the Priesthood, and to me their Apologist; rest yourselves entirely satisfy'd with all I have said, and take the Truth of it upon the *Verbum Sacerdotis*, which for this Evening I have a Right to make use of.

F I N I S.

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